"My Wife Must Be A Bird In A Cage"

Very Old-Fashioned Ideas of How a Married Couple Ought to Behave, by Guido Ciccolini, the Grand Opera Tenor, Who Has Just Wedded an Athletic, Beautiful and Fashionable New York Debutante

WHEN Guido Ciccolini, the grand opera tenor, who ranks only second to Caruso in fame, married just the other day Miss Betty Sutphin, the accomplished, charming and athletic daughter of the wealthy and fashionable New York family of that name, a very interesting romance began another chapter.

But the romance, interesting as it is, conceals a still more interesting question—how long can the chapter last?

This perplexity has nothing whatever to do with any of the circumstances of the wooing, winning and wedding of Miss Sutphin by the singer. It has its roots in Mr. Ciccolini's ideals of what marriage ought to be. These are extremely concrete and old-fashioned.

Put in briefest possible form, they are that when a girl marries she oughtn't devote any time or thought to any man except her husband.

Mr. Ciccolini puts it in even fewer words: "My wife must be a bird in a cage!"

But so, he adds, must the husband!

This proposition, terse and simple as it seems, at once presents complications when set beside the steadily increasing freedom of women, the modern attitude of independence of daughter, mother and grand-ma so far as their males are concerned and their assumption that the wedding ring is a token of trust and not a brand of private ownership that shackles even their friendships. To many it will seem like Rip Van Winkle, just awakened, strolling down Peacock Alley. Others will no doubt sympathize with Mr. Ciccolini's point of view.

What presents the peculiar complications are the lives, past and present, of Mr. Ciccolini and his bride themselves.

Mrs. Ciccolini has been reared like any other American girl, whether wealthy or in moderate circumstances. She has been used to a far broader freedom than the signorinas of her husband's land or the demoiselles of France. She has had hosts of young men friends who have danced and played tennis, swam and driven with her. She has liked them, still likes them. She has been brought up, like most American girls, "with the boys."

Can she suddenly step away from all these into the cage of her husband's ideals and remain happy?

On the other hand, Mr. Ciccolini is a grand opera tenor. Students of the emotions have set down as a tried and tested fact that there is nothing like a grand opera tenor to move a woman's heart. The greatest violinist or pianist cannot so play upon its strings as can he. This power has become recognized as part of his capital, one of his assets.

"A grand opera tenor, like any other great artist, belongs to his art and the world. His wife should be happy to have what is left of him."

So runs the formula of the temperamental. But beside this admiration he must appear in many parts. Usually the tenor parts are romantic. He shines in romantic situations of which love is invariably the theme. When, for instance, carried away by his role and his artistry, he presses as Don Jose his lips against the red ones of Carmen, how can he know that he is still safely within his own cage? This is just one instance.

It was the day after the marriage that Ciccolini, his bride with him, announced to a few friends his ideals.

"An artist belongs first to his art and the world—last to his wife!" he exclaimed. "It astounds me, that point of view. It shocks me!

"An artist is first a man, a human. One of the greatest, if not the greatest, things in this world for a man and a woman is Love. Love is greater than art. It is the inspiration of all truly great art. Love is greater even than Life itself. For without Love, Life is barren.

"The Creator gave man many blessings, but his last and greatest gift to man was woman—to mend his faults and mould him into virtue! We have learned that it is not the throned and sceptred king; it is not the dark statesman, with his midnight lamp, nor is it even the warrior, grimed with smoke and stained with blood, but it is the Queen of the home, who, under the Creator, rules the destinies of mankind. There is the centre from which radiates the light that never fails. The sweetest wisdom in all this world is a pure woman's council. And to me the noblest altar from which human prayer ever went to heaven is a mother's knee.

"Being a man, I know and appreciate these things. How then could I, loving my wife as I do and knowing of her love for me, possibly give her anything short of all my love and all my attentions?

"But she must do the same. I could not bear even to think of my wife accepting the attentions of another man, no matter what the circumstances were. My heart would break at the very thought of it.

"A wife ought to live in a cage—a cage of love whose door only her husband may open. She should have no song but for him, no eyes but for him and no thought for any other man but him.

"And so ought the husband.

"Forgetting my own family for the moment, let me tell you of something which was just told to me and which startles me very much. I hear that many American girls feel that there is nothing for a husband to object to if his wife sees fit to take tea and attend dansants with gentlemen friends and admirers.

"They say there is no harm in the wife entertaining long-known friends even in her own home. Is that not astounding? Now, of course, there is no apparent harm, but, oh, what danger lurks in the background of such meetings. And why should his happiness be laid open to possible destruction? Can you imagine what the wife would say if the husband asked permission to entertain former feminine friends and admirers of his in her home?

"I dare say you will find very few couples who are really in love with one another who could successfully live happily with any such conduct being engaged in by either one of them. Sooner or later the beautiful castle of their love dreams would be undermined and crumple. I much prefer the good old-fashioned lives of solidity lived by my own ancestors and by the fathers and mothers of this generation.

"Speaking generally, when referring to the temptations of a husband, do not forget the temptations and pitfalls continually facing any beautiful girl, single or married. Consider here the case of the husband, any husband, of a beautiful girl. The husband of such a girl, if he is sincerely in love with his wife, must have no eyes, if he is not to be, as your native Indians say, 'on the warpath' most all the time.

"Why, to me it is positively disgusting how men here and on the Continent attempt to force their attentions upon every beautiful and attractive woman they see. In travelling it is necessary at times to live in the public hotels. As is the case with many men in different walks of life, it is not possible for the husband and wife to be together every minute of the day, and it is necessary of course that at times the wife must walk alone through the lobby of a hotel.

The Beautiful Mrs. Guido Ciccolini (Nee Miss Betty Sutphin) Within the Cage and Outside It—And Mr. Ciccolini, the Grand Opera Tenor Whose Ideals of Marriage Are So Unusually Unmodern.

"Here lie in wait the bold, ungentlemanly, unchivalrous men, who, without even the lady being apparent of their presence, attempt by all manner of means to inflict themselves upon her company. A wife cannot in the nature of things be chaperoned or with her husband every second, and it is most surprising how many men of seemingly respectable appearance so torture beautiful women as to almost make their beauty a curse instead of a blessing. Of course there is not temptation in this for any real woman, but the boldness and cunning of these men is astounding, and they cause no end of trouble.

"If I could not bear to think of all this with respect to my wife, how could I expect her to bear it with respect to myself, even though it is said that as a grand opera tenor I belong to the public?

"An artist belongs to the public only while he or she is appearing before that public. And surely the public will admire the artistry of a highly idealed, clean-souled artist who aspires to a noble character to a greater extent than it will the art of one whose private life is not so moulded. And surely it is possible to admire the art of an artist without finding it necessary to admire him personally!

"When a man loves a woman as deeply and as unreservedly as I love my Betty and marries her, even though he is a public character inasmuch as he is an artist, he thereby elects to resign all other women in the world and to confine the giving and receiving of all attentions to that one woman—his wife.

"I unqualifiedly expect that of my wife, and I know she expects it of me. And we shall both conform to that rule. Is it not so, Betty?"

Mrs. Ciccolini seemed to have no reservations in her acceptance of the points of this league— but there was something of wistfulness in her answer.

"I know that this demands that at times I will fairly be like a bird in a cage," she said. "A girl usually has more boy friends than girl friends, and it is awfully hard practically to have to give up life-long friendships and associations with many charming men. But then every girl who is lucky enough to find the man she really loves and marries him should do that.

"And this won't be so hard for me, particularly when I think how much more my husband is giving up, because you know a world-famous tenor really does have many feminine admirers and a life of gayety, both so dear to the hearts of most men."

Very touching, very romantic, very idealistic—and this such a hard, hard world for the tender feet of ideals to tread! It will take courage.

If it will take courage, as undoubtedly it will, for Mrs. Ciccolini to carry out the treaty, she has given proof that she has no lack of it. Her heroic rescue of the secretary of the late President Roosevelt furnishes one example. She saved him from drowning, at risk of her own life, in the Sound at Oyster Bay, where the Sutphins have their Summer home. The letter and photograph that Mr. Roosevelt sent her in acknowledgement of that achievement is one of her most treasured possessions.

Mr. Ciccolini makes a reservation for such attentions as the saving of a lone man.

And yet—ought he? For it was by a similar attention that he himself met Miss Sutphin, and their love was born. Ciccolini had been injured in an automobile accident on Long Island. He lay unconscious. Miss Sutphin happened to come along, put him in her car, rushed him to a hospital and as soon as it was allowed helped nurse him back to life and strength.

Before he had left the hospital the two had plighted themselves to each other.

And their marriage was quite unexpected—that is, the date of it. Ciccolini was on tour. The set day was considerably in the future. His plans were taking him to California. Some one impressed upon his bride-to-be the dangerous charms of the California ladies.

And a telegram came that made the singer break his tour and turn right back to Long Island and the wedding ring. Mrs. Ciccolini frankly admits that she was nervous. But now, her star safely married to her and with the ideals described, of course she need no longer be nervous, and is not.

Ought a wife live in a cage?

Ought a husband?

Can she?

Can he?

Only time can answer.